

Golf Vacation: You Deserve It

Feeling tired and overworked? Time for a little RandR? You can duck out of work early for a quick nine holes at the local golf club, or you can go for the ultimate stress-busting break with a golf vacation.

If you've always wanted to take a golf vacation, but never seem to find the time, take a little advice from Nike and "Just Do It." Schedule a week off, call your travel agent and get the ball rolling. Once you set the time aside, all of the other plans will nicely fall into place.

For most of us, of course, budget plays a major role in our vacation plans. Know how much money you have to spend on travel, accommodations, meals, sightseeing excursions and, of course, all the golf you can pack in to one week. With a firm dollar amount at hand, you'll be able to shop for the golf vacation package that suits your needs and your budget.

Before you agree to a vacation package, take the time to prioritize your selection of golf vacation destinations. Make sure that it's somewhere you really want to be, rather than simply settling on a good package deal and hoping that they have a decent golf course nearby.

Magazines like Golf Digest and Golf and Travel are great resources for travel information. Here, you'll find some great golf vacation destinations and detailed descriptions of many of the world's best golf courses. Settle down with a few back issues and you'll be able to get a clear idea of what's waiting for you in the great big world of golf.

Once you've settled on a destination, it's essential to research for the golf package that suits you to a "tee". If you don't have time to research destinations and packages through books or online, find a good travel agent. He or she will be able to provide you with all the information you need. Remember, they are trained professionals and chances are, they've been to some of the destinations you're considering. Your travel agent can make most of the arrangements, saving you money, trouble, time and above all, stress.

Packing for a vacation is always a little tricky, but knowing what to bring on a golf vacation can be downright confusing. Do you bring your own clubs, or rent them at your destination? Playing with a set of rental clubs can be risky, so many golfers choose to bring their own personal equipment. This means carrying an extra load and checking your precious clubs with the rest of your luggage, but it can be well worth the extra hassle. Remember, the purpose of your vacation is to relax and unwind, so don't spend too much time fretting over your clubs. Always make sure that "fun" is priority number one.

If you decide to bring your clubs, make sure that you have a good golf bag as well. With hotel keys, sunscreen, traveler's checks and more accessories than you may normally carry, you'll need to make use of every bit of storage space available. Pack your sunglasses, sunscreen, visor and accessories before leaving, and you won't need to worry about finding and repacking when you're ready to hit those vacation golf courses.

Just because you're on vacation, that doesn't mean that you should leave your personal rules and routines behind. Don't forget to warm up before your tee time. This will not only improve your game, but it can lessen the chances of pulled muscles. There is no nastier golfer's nightmare than being stuck in bed with a sore back while on a golf vacation. Take it from the experts; arrive at the clubhouse well before your tee time, and allow plenty of time to warm up.

If you're only able to get away for a few days, try to maximize your time on the course as much as the golf course management will allow. Playing one round at two, or two rounds at one, will allow you to fully enjoy your short stay, and get the most value for your money.

You've worked hard for your golf vacation, and you should treat it as a special getaway. Plan ahead, spoil yourself a little, and don't take the trip too seriously. While there's always the chance that you'll run into a pro golfer on a Southern California course and learn a few new tips to improve your swing, remember that your golf vacation is all about having fun.